THE

RECONSTRUCTIONIST

DEDICATED TO THE ADVANCEMENT OF JUDAISM AS A RELIGIOUS CIVILIZATION, TO THE UPBUILDING OF ISRAEL'S ANCIENT HOMELAND, AND TO THE FURTHERANCE OF UNIVERSAL FREEDOM, JUSTICE AND PEACE.

Vol. I | January 25, 1935—Shebat 21, 5695 | No. 2

EDITORIALS

REPRESENTING AMERICAN JEWRY

THE NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON JEWISH WELFARE

TAKING PROFITS OUT OF MUNITIONS

PALESTINE AND THE JEWISH MASSES

SOCIAL IDEALISM IN JEWISH LIFE
by Edward L. Israel

THE MENACE OF LAND SPECULATION IN PALESTINE
by Israel Goldstein

BOOK REVIEW

RELIGION AS A FUNCTION OF EXPERIENCE, *by Ira Eisenstein*

PUBLISHED BY

THE SOCIETY FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF JUDAISM

15 West 86th Street, New York, N. Y.

THE RECONSTRUCTIONIST POSITION

WE approach our task from the point of view of Judaism as a religious civilization. We envisage Judaism as the proper concern of all Jews, religious and unreligious, conservative and radical . . .

IN affirming that Judaism is a civilization we give emphasis to the fact that it includes . . . communal organization, language, law, art, mores, customs, as well as religion. Moreover, all of these elements are organically related to each other; to omit any of them is to distort Judaism. All of them are functions of the group life of Israel and cannot be maintained unless we maintain the unity and integrity of the Jewish people and the continuity of its spiritual efforts. WE believe that the material and spiritual welfare of the Jews can be achieved only through Jewish communal organization . . . We favor the establishment of Jewish communal life in America, democratically administered and organized in such a manner as to include all Jews who wish to identify themselves with the Jewish people, regardless of what their personal philosophy may be.

IN affirming that Judaism is a *religious* civilization, we recognize first, the historic fact that the God idea has dominated the entire pattern of Jewish life in the past, and that continuity with our past is impossible without giving to religion a position, if not of primacy, at least of *primus inter pares;* and secondly, the social fact that a mature and complete civilization is bound to find expression in the idea of God and in forms of religious worship in which the hopes and ideals of human life are rendered articulate. It is that very sense of need for religion that impels us to reinterpret the traditional beliefs in keeping with what for us must be a tenable world outlook, and to revise and develop the traditional usages in keeping with spiritual needs which we can genuinely experience.

WE consider the establishment of Palestine indispensable to the life of Judaism in the diaspora. We seek to enable Jewish civilization so to root itself in the soil of Palestine as to make of the land the cultural center for Israel's intellectual and spiritual rebirth. We oppose any attempt to render Palestine the object of imperialist aims or the victim of private profit-seeking. We endorse every effort toward the establishment of a cooperative commonwealth in Palestine based upon social justice and social cooperation . . .

WE are opposed to fascism in every form. We object to any philosophy of government which seeks to curtail the rights of individuals to the free pursuit of personal salvation through participation in any religious or cultural activity, or through affiliation with any national or ethnic group . . . Recognizing the horror and irrationality of war as a means of adjusting conflicting interests, we shall support every effort looking to the perfection of machinery for the peaceful adjudication of such conflicts and to the utilization of such machinery as exists, wherever possible. Under no circumstances shall we give countenance or support to an imperialistic war that is designed to advance the interests of exploiting and oppressing classes . . .

SOCIAL righteousness is possible only upon the establishment of a cooperative society, the elimination of the profit system, and the public ownership of all natural resources and basic industries. Until these objectives are achieved our sympathies and our support go to labor in its struggle with its employers for a more equitable distribution of the income of industry, and in the assertion of its right to organize for the protection of its interests without interference from its employers.

—*From "The Reconstructionist", January* 11, 1935.

THE
RECONSTRUCTIONIST

Vol. I. January 25, 1935—Shebat 21, 5695 No. 2

EDITORIAL BOARD

MORDECAI M. KAPLAN, *Chairman*

BEN ZION BOKSER ISRAEL GOLDSTEIN
ISRAEL S. CHIPKIN EUGENE KOHN
IRA EISENSTEIN LEON S. LANG
MILTON STEINBERG

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

BARNETT R. BRICKNER JACOB S. GOLUB
ALEXANDER M. DUSHKIN EDWARD L. ISRAEL
MAX KADUSHIN

THE RECONSTRUCTIONIST is published bi-weekly from September to June by the Society for the Advancement of Judaism, 15 West 86th St., New York, N. Y. Subscription $1.00 a year; foreign $1.25; individual copy 10 cents. Application for entry as second class matter is pending.

EDITORIALS

Representing American Jewry

THE American Jewish Committee has declined participation in the elections of the American Jewish Congress which is to take action on America's representation at the projected World Jewish Congress. In so doing it surprised no one who is at all familiar with the records of the two organizations. The American Jewish Congress, running true to form, will now proceed with the elections and the organization of the World Jewish Congress as if it had the unanimous backing of American Jewry. Each of the two organizations can be depended upon to make a major effort to convince the Jewish public that the other does not represent them. Sad to say, they will both be right.

The American Jewish Congress may protest ever so loudly that, by extending the suffrage to all Jews who wish to take part in the election, it has justified its claim to being democratically representative of American Jews. The American Jewish Committee may say that it is entitled to greater confidence because its personnel was not elected by an irresponsible electorate of unaffiliated Jews with no permanent interest in Jewish life. Each organization appeals in the name of democracy and each continues to ignore the fundamental truth that democracy can have no meaning except where there is a *demos*. It is idle to speak in the name of the will of the Jewish people as long as there is no "Jewish people" but merely Jews. That is the case at the present time. We are not a corporate entity, but a mere agglomeration of individuals. Without a continuously functioning, integrated Jewish community, in which every individual Jew and every Jewish movement have a place, there can be no democracy.

If the representatives of the American Jewish Congress wish to confer with those of similar bodies from other parts of the world, they are privileged to do so, but without the participation of the American Jewish Committee and other organizations representing the same sort of constituency in other lands, such an assembly would be a World Jewish Congress in name only; its leaders would have no more mandate from the Jewish people to speak in their name than have those of the American Jewish Committee.

In view of the rising tide of anti-Semitism one can understand the feverish desire of the Congress to "go ahead and do something." One can sympathize with the impulse to mobilize the Jewish masses behind the fight in defense of Jewish rights. But why deceive ourselves? One cannot create a mass-movement *ad hoc* to meet a specific crisis. The impatience and impetuosity of the Congress are intelligible, but

impatience is no sign of strength. An ancient legend has it that the tribe of Ephraim, impatient of deliverance from Egyptian bondage, decided on a precipitate exodus without awaiting the action of the remaining tribes, and met with disaster. We can also sympathize with the American Jewish Committee's distrust of hastily organized parliaments, composed largely of persons elected because of their success in canvassing votes and having no responsibility to a controlling constituency. Parliamentarianism at its best has its weaknesses where decisive action is needed. But mere private negotiation without mass backing is necessarily inefficient. The organized support or organized opposition of the Jewish masses may influence statesmen, where the most astute arguments of the most clever advocates are of no avail. We, therefore, say to both organizations: *lo zu haderekh*, "Not this is the way."

Before stepping in to solve the problem of World Jewry, both organizations should unite in an effort to organize American Jewry. They should envisage this problem of organization *de novo* and in its totality. A mere defensive alignment of Jews against the hostility of the outside world is not enough. To awaken the sense of loyalty and devotion capable of giving force and impetus to a mass-movement, Jews must be organized in communities that interest themselves in every aspect of Jewish welfare and embrace every Jewish economic, social, cultural and religious interest. Such an organic community life would generate the sentiment of Jewish unity, would develop a responsible leadership and a responsive following and would constitute a social force capable of mass action.

The National Conference on Jewish Welfare

THE recent conference held at Temple Emanuel in New York City under the auspices of the Council of Jewish Federations and Welfare Funds was a welcome occurrence in Jewish community life for it focused attention upon the multiplicity of Jewish group activities and upon the problem of Jewish responsibility for them.

But from the point of view of Jewish community reconstruction and group survival, the conference was decidedly disappointing. Although a voice was raised from time to time advocating cultural and character development activities, several of the most important lay leaders and professional executives found it necessary to caution the delegates against the possible impression that the Council believes in or is fostering any constructive integrated program of Jewish group life. The President of the Council opined in a public address that "social welfare" alone (in its restricted sense of relief and charity) can serve as a basis for common action by Jewish citizens. In his public summary of the proceedings he declared that the variety of subjects discussed and of views expressed at the conference pointed to the danger of attempting to establish a planned, and integrated program of Jewish community life.

Describing "the outstanding and most dramatic session in the conference" dealing with "Jewish adjustment and integration into American life," this same gentleman characterized the spokesman for a planned, organized, democratic, responsible and self-supporting Jewish group life as the apostle of "Neo-Orthodoxy" or "Neo-Catholicism," while the speaker who sponsored a laissez-faire, individualistic policy for Jews he called the champion of "liberalism and enlightenment." To this champion and to his admirer, Jewish group life could spell nothing less than Jewish ghetto life; they prefer assimilation.

The negativist attitude of so many of the speakers proves that there is a crucial need to emphasize one fact: that if there is to be a future for Jewish life, it will depend, in the

words of one of the rabbis participating in the conference, "upon the earnestness of Jewish leaders to lead Jews, not into assimilation, but into a pattern of thought and action which will enrich American life with a creative Jewish life."

Taking Profits Out of Munitions

THE investigation into the munitions' industry, ably conducted by Senator Nye's committee, should lead farther than President Roosevelt's proposal to "take the profits out of war." Even the total confiscation of war profits in munitions would not be an effective prophylactic against the evils which Senator Nye's committee has exposed. It is the profits of the munitions' industry in so-called peace time which constitute the danger. For the sake of such profits armament manufacturers manufacture war scares, promote chauvinistic nationalism, sabotage disarmament conferences, instigate armament races and breed wars. It is not only in war time but in peace time that the international "merchants of death" wax rich and jeopardize the peace of the world. "Take the profits out of munitions" should, therefore, be the slogan. The munitions' industry must be nationalized and made a government monopoly.

It should be recognized, however, that even the nationalization of the munitions' industry is only a fragmentary solution of the problem. Every form of private profit has a stake in the war system. The munitions' industry is only the most conspicuous example of many capitalistic enterprises, from the chemical manufacturer to the cotton grower, which stands to gain from preparations for war in time of peace. It may be stated as a general formula that the capitalistic system breeds war. The fundamental solution, therefore, and the only comprehensive prophylactic against the likelihood of wars, would be the reconstruction of our economic system.

Palestine and the Jewish Masses

AMERICAN Zionist leaders have taken a step in the right direction in emphasizing mass registration in the movement for the rebuilding of our ancient homeland. The Zionist Roll Call, recently inaugurated, and the calling of the National Conference for Palestine, are encouraging indications that we are returning to very important fundamentals. The aims of Zionism as well as its practical program become really significant only as they reflect the articulate will of the great masses of the Jewish people. One emergency after another since the beginning of the World War has deflected Zionist leadership from this basic principle in the development of Zionism. It must be admitted that the gigantic task of settling nearly a quarter of a million Jews in Palestine in less than two decades required immediate financial resources. This task drove Zionists into the technique of charity campaigns, which led to an increasing dependence on large contributions and the tendency to set up in each community the kind of Zionist machinery best suited for fund raising. As the material and the moral support of non-Zionists became the objective of expert campaigners, the Palestine project was transformed more and more into just another philanthropy, another relief measure to which contributions from the compassionate were invited. The violent negation of Zionist ideology which this emphasis implied was recognized, but always condoned because of "emergencies."

The Roll Call now gives the Zionist Organization an opportunity to correct this wrong emphasis by enabling every Jew, through a nominal contribution, to give expression to his desire to be identified with the upbuilding of Palestine. By this means the movement can become again what it was originally conceived to be: the functioning of those dynamic and creative forces among the masses of the Jewish people which strive for a renascence of Israel.

The results of such a rallying of Jew-

ish public opinion may be even more far reaching. If every congregation, fraternal lodge, labor union and other type of Jewish organization respond overwhelmingly to the Call, incalculable prestige and authority will accrue to the demands of Zionist leadership in its negotiations with the Mandatory Government and the Mandates Commission. In addition, the broad base of affiliation will tend to provide those wholesome safeguards which are necessary for the democratic character of Zionist administration.

Social Idealism in Jewish Life

By EDWARD L. ISRAEL

IT has often been said that Judaism is primarily a way of life. But it is more than that; it is an ethical way of life. Judaism is not a revealed religion in the sense in which this term is applied to so many other faiths. Its ideas concerning God and human relations are the result of the life of the national group over many centuries and its reaction to the circumstances of its experience. Jewish ethics is the crystallized consciousness of a people, and not a promulgation of any one leader. It is true that various leaders became the outstanding spokesmen for spiritual and social ideals. We must remember, however, that whether it was a Moses, an Amos or an Isaiah, these men merely articulated their own conceptions of the distillations of Jewish experience.

The Hebrew Bible is the basic record of the results of this process over a period of some twelve to fifteen centuries. As the Jewish people issued from the era of tribal feuds and blood revenge, it made its way under the direction of a religious inspiration which found that social moral progress was the most important thing in life. In the Mosaic Code, bound up with a belief in God and the moral responsibility of Israel, there are found ideas that foreshadow some of the most modern legislation. It is well known that the prophetic social teachings were born out of the economic background of the ninth, eighth, seventh and sixth centuries before the Christian era. The specific denunciations of monopoly, profiteering and the like were the inevitable expressions of prophetic souls who saw that the national genius of Israel was to bring to *human* injustice the uncompromising judgment of *Divine* justice. The doctrine of the brotherhood of man was the inevitable result of this concept. Some day, both Jews and non-Jews will understand that, basic in an evolved Jewish nationalism, was really the inspiration of the universalistic ideals of the prophets. Our current misconceptions of nationalism still blind our eyes to this fact.

The destruction of the Temple in the year 70 and the dispersion of Jewry wrought considerable havoc in this field of social ethics, as in many others. It is not our province here to describe in any detail the social idealism or practices of the Tanaim or their successors, but even a perfunctory reference to the pages of the Talmud or the Midrash will disclose the essential connection of rabbinic Judaism with social and economic movements. That much maligned "legalism" of the ancient rabbis contributed to the embodiment of social ideals through a group religious consciousness and a constantly developing group tradition.

A lamentable distortion of the normal relation of Jews and Judaism to social and economic movements was caused by the period of the persecutions and the ghetto. Divorced from normal life, Jewish social ethics became academic

and doctrinaire. The opportunity for practical contact with contemporaneous social problems was absolutely impossible because of the barriers built by a hostile world.

The coming of the emancipation and the struggle for civil rights brought about significant changes in Jewish life. Emancipation did not mean the cessation of hostility to Jews in the outside world. We know that, from certain angles, it meant the rise of modern anti-Semitism. The opportunity for emancipation drove the Reformist elements in Judaism to all sorts of group compromises in seeking an adaptation to modern life. Among the Orthodox it increased rigidity, and often developed additional hostility to the outside world. Struggles began between Reformism and Orthodoxy. The coming of the age of science, with the startling necessity for unprecedented theological adaptation, found Judaism internally weakened by this strife which arose with the beginning of "enlightenment". It is just another tragedy of Jewish life that the age of science began before the Jew had made his readjustment to the modern world. If there had been a decent breathing spell for the solution of these problems, it is entirely possible that Judaism, with its sound rational basis and its remarkable powers of adaptation, might have met the problem of modern science in a manner emulable by all religious groups. As it was, many of our youth, disgusted with the futile wrangling over these inner problems of Jewish life, were all the more susceptible to the materialism of early modern science.

Most unfortunate of all, the preoccupation with such matters as assimilation or nationalism, Reformism or Orthodoxy, and the like, occurred during the most momentous days of the industrial revolution when there was the greatest need for a Judaism along the traditional lines of dynamic social idealism. Such a Judaism, however, was lacking almost entirely at that time. As a result, religiously, Judaism as such exerted little or no influence on the powerful change in social ideals during the nineteenth century. Worse than that, the latter nineteenth and early twentieth centuries found the formal expression of "progressive" Judaism in the hands of those who had gained considerable material comfort from the existing social order. With this condition on the one hand and, on the other, a Judaism primarily concerned with post-ghetto problems of civil and religious adjustment, there resulted a situation in which the official connection of the Jew as such, and of Judaism per se, with social and economic movements was almost nil.

This practical sterility of the official and organized Jewish group was not correspondingly reflected among Jews as individuals during this period. Within the Jewish masses there was great non-religious or even anti-religious interest in social ideals. In Germany, in the second quarter of the nineteenth century, Gabriel Riesser and many other Jews engaged actively in the struggle for civil rights for the people at large. As Jews, their attitude was that Jewish emancipation rested on the general spread of democratic ideals. In Russia, throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, many Jews were identified with revolutionary movements. The spread of Marxism, which usually meant the emphasis on an anti-religious attitude, engulfed great masses of the Jewish people.

II

Turning to America, we find a most interesting economic development which had considerable influence on Jews and Judaism with reference to social and economic movements. The major German migrations to America took place at a time when, in the United States, there was free exercise of the pioneer spirit. The number of these German Jewish immigrants was comparatively small. The new arrivals were able to integrate themselves speedily into Amer-

ican life. Most of them passed quickly through pack-peddling into the role of small business man or even merchant and manufacturer. When the waves of Russian immigration came, these German Jews were, for the greater part, employers.

The Russian Jews came to this country under pressure of most horrible persecutions. They arrived in such numbers that it was impossible for them to be integrated into American economic life as successfully as their German predecessors had been. Furthermore, at that later date, the opportunities for wealth by individual exploitation were not nearly as great. What happened is well-known history. Hundreds of thousands of Russian Jews were forced into sweat shops amid terrible conditions. Many of them carried with them something of the revolutionary and frequently anti-religious spirit which they had acquired in Europe. Here in America, this irreligious fervor was intensified, first of all, because the synagogues, both Reformist and Orthodox, were often dominated by men whom the masses considered labor exploiters and, secondly, because American Judaism was almost entirely inarticulate on matters of social and economic ideals. True, the pulpits occasionally indulged in vague sermons about the mission of Israel and the glory of the Hebrew prophets, but hardly ever was there a definite and coordinated effort to make Jewish social ideals alive in terms of the day.

The numbers of the anti-religious increased. They organized movements of their own. The "Arbeiter Ring" may today be less hostile to religion than it was in those days, but, at the outset, its program included picnics on Yom Kippur, to flaunt the fact that, as far as these workers were concerned, the spiritual life of Israel meant nothing. They drifted away from religion not on the basis of Darwinism or Huxleyism. In other groups such *isms* may have severed Jews from Jewish life. These Jews, however, were estranged by the absence of a real social message. This circumstance was especially regrettable because that social message was an essential part of the Jewish racial genius.

This genius could not be denied, and many of these non-religious or anti-religious Jews became organizers of trade union movements in America with their splendid contributions to the improvement of American labor. The entire organization of the needle trades is bound up in the activities of these Jews; a book like Levine's history of the International Ladies' Garment Workers Union reveals this fact clearly. It was the realization of an unemphasized aspect of the Jewish historical consciousness that led these Jews to step out of the mass and crystallize the radical economic ideals of justice, even as, centuries before, a Nathan or an Amos had stepped from the ranks of Israel. Sad to relate, many of these labor leaders, even today, continue to distrust the manifestations of interest on the part of Jewish religious groups in social problems, although, officially, Judaism has become greatly concerned with economic movements.

A few years ago, I called a meeting of a group of Jewish labor leaders in New York. The reaction of one of the group was significant and rather typical. He said, "Well, here I am. Come, and save my soul." I ignored the bitter sarcasm and explained to him that my approach to labor was basically on a platform of common social idealism, that the Jewish religious outlook on life was interested in many of the same things that motivated labor leaders in their work in the field of labor; that I was not interested in dragging them into a synagogue, but that since we had a mutual social goal, we ought to be able to work hand in hand for the realization of these ideals. His attitude changed and he explained to me that his suspicion of any rabbinical interest in social problems arose some years ago when the Orthodox rabbis of-

fered assistance in behalf of a five day week. He told me that he soon discovered that they were not interested in the problems of the working man at all, but simply in having a free Saturday on which they expected the working people to flock to the synagogue. This labor leader affirmed that he did not care for such cooperation; that if the Jewish laborer was ever to return to the synagogue, it would not be on such a basis.

There are other significant examples of the manner in which the inherently socially idealistic Jewish soul, frustrated by the distortion of Jewish life in modern times, nevertheless exhibited its basic genius. To certain Jews, more than to members of any other group, Communism in Russia has become a sort of religion. All the repressed zeal of the Jewish racial genius, denied expression in an alien environment, has cast itself into that mold most available for the expression of social yearnings. There is no greater tragedy ascribable to the *galut* than this diversion of an inherent Jewish spirit into anti-religious channels. If we cannot condone this situation, we can explain it: these Jews had to have their spiritual compensation. Failing to get it in Judaism, they found it elsewhere.

But the non-religious Jewish connection with liberal, socially idealistic movements is not normal in the diaspora. Even the secular Jew is still a Jew. He is always conscious of an actively or potentially hostile environment. He often fears that any too great aggressiveness on his part will play into the hands of the Jew-baiter. He knows that he is blamed for communist activities and that his most patriotic impulses are always under suspicion. Even in the United States many Jews deplore the presence of Jews on radical soap boxes, and they would much prefer that Jewish lawyers did not go to Alabama to fight for Negro rights. I can personally testify that, on quite a number of occasions when I have been asked to head committees protesting against violations of civil liberties or social justice, I have asked to be allowed to serve merely as a member in the ranks because I felt that the presence of a Jew at the head of the movement would hurt both the movement and the Jews. Even those Jews who have discarded these susceptibilities have done so in a sort of conscious defiance of a hostile environment and not out of an ignorance of the existence of these factors.

The marked return to the normal functioning of this religious national heritage of social idealism is demonstrated in certain colonies in Palestine. It is true that, even there, we have some vestigial remains of the anti-religious post-ghetto reactions. These, however, are fast disappearing in the normal atmosphere of an indigenous Jewish life. It is my opinion that the strong socialistic emphasis among the Chalutzim is in reality a sort of atavism. They were attracted to socialistic ideas in the diaspora because of a Jewish predisposition to social idealism. In the Jewish homeland, this predisposition can function in a normal manner.

The traditional championship of the underdog, which is basic in Jewish social expression, may stir antagonism in Arab politicians and labor exploiters, but the environment will conquer that opposition. The behaviorist may deny that there is anything hereditary in the transmission of this Jewish social idealsm. I do not wish to quibble over terminology; I simply maintain that the mores of the group, which we call Jewish tradition, have conditioned the Jews in this way, and for the complete expression of this developed sense of social justice, there is no place like Palestine. The supreme aspect of the rebirth of Jewish nationalism will be the re-creation of this social idealism under uniquely and distinctly Jewish auspices.

III.

It would be incorrect and unfair not to make record of the fact that in America, in particular, Judaism has striven to overcome the obstacles of the environment and recapture its traditional heritage of social justice. The awakening of formal religious forces has come terribly late, but the beginning is there. The genesis of this Jewish social revival began in the ranks of Reformism, with the Central Conference of American Rabbis.

The first step was taken in 1908 when the Federal Child Labor Amendment was endorsed. By 1918 this social yearning had become codified into a set of principles. They were not radical principles and they were passed only after great struggle over enormous opposition within the rabbinical ranks. The brand of the *galut* still deterred many from a fearless expression of Jewish social ideals. But by 1928 this program had become amplified, embracing advanced opinions on practically every social and economic problem of the day. The program was adopted then almost unanimously. Within the past year or two the Central Conference of American Rabbis has gone even further, practically advocating the abolition of the profit system through some orderly democratic process.

Some may be surprised that the Reformist rabbis, representing congregations much more capitalistic than other groups in Jewish life, should have been the pioneers in this field. An understanding of Reformism and of its background can account for this fact. Reformism endeavored to make Jewish tradition vital by translating it into modern terms and by interpreting it in line with contemporary concepts. This is an ideal which has certainly not been fully achieved in Reformist circles. It is nevertheless true that Reformism has freed itself from certain inhibitions characteristic of the neo-Orthodox and Conservative groups and, in some respects, has been able to approach more directly the inherent values of the Jewish racial and religious genius. If our contention be sound that social idealism is central in this heritage, then it was only natural that the Reformist rabbis should have been the first to recapture an ideal which centuries of persecution and distortion had blotted out of formal Jewish emphasis.

Whether these be the reasons or not, the fact remains that the Reformist rabbis were the first organized Jewish group in modern times to interpret Jewish prophetic and ethical teachings in terms of concrete social problems of the day. This they did in a program of social justice which has the following as its preamble: "Deriving our inspiration for social justice from the teachings of the prophets of Israel and the other great traditions of our faith, and applying these teachings concretely to the economic and social problems of today, we, the Central Conference of American Rabbis make this declaration of social principles."

Notice that they do not claim to codify Jewish social teachings anew and for all time, but only for the current day. Their argument might be stated in the following manner: "We ask ourselves what Judaism thinks specifically about unemployment insurance, old age pensions, the profit system and the like. We cannot merely content ourselves with answering, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.' This is a very fine expression, but we know that the prophets of Israel, and Moses himself, were not satisfied with such vague generalities. Amos addressed himself specifically to the profiteering of his day and the exploitation of the masses. Isaiah, confronted with a social problem of land monopoly, talked directly about that problem. If Jewish tradition is to be a vital thing, it must do what Jewish life did whenever it functioned normally. In Biblical and Talmudic times it interpreted its general social idealism in specific terms. We today

want to make Jewish life function even in the diaspora as normally as possible, and we are merely trying to recapture the essence of the Jewish soul."

It would be impossible within the confines of this article to recount the history of the Social Justice Commission of the Central Conference of American Rabbis during the last few years. The Commission has not been content merely with expressing social attitudes. It has gone directly into areas of conflict, the Pennsylvania mining regions, the Southern textile centers, into strikes and lockouts, into violations of civil liberties and contests for social legislation. Here, either individually or in cooperation with other groups, it has carried on vigorous activity.

Within the past year or two the Rabbinical Assembly of America, representing the so-called Conservative rabbis, has become more and more actively engaged in this field. It promises, too, to revitalize this social justice tradition for American life.

It must be admitted that, with the exception of some few individuals, the Jewish laity, as a group, has not been singularly aggressive along these lines. Certainly the religious lay organizations have been rather general and evasive in their expression of social idealism. The laity is usually more conservative along social and economic lines. Then too, we have not been given the equipment of a well coordinated system of Jewish religious instruction in this field by which to raise a generation of socially minded men and women who draw their inspiration from Jewish sources. We have some splendid socially minded Jewish educators. The great task confronting them is to evolve a system of Jewish educational life which will constitute a reinforcement of these efforts now being made by the rabbis. The need is far more imperative than can be expressed in a pious wish. If Judaism is to survive in the diaspora, it will survive on the basis of a revitalization of its unique social heritage. Otherwise, having lost our distinctive quality and badge of individuality, we will be engulfed in assimilation.

IV.

I do not mean for a moment that Judaism has any monopoly on social idealism. I mean merely that we have a history inaugurated by the deliverance from bondage which breathes a yearning for freedom from persecution, cherishes the ideals of prophets and teachers evolved from the group experience, and blends all of these into our group consciousness. We Jews speak in social terms not as theorists or as idealists, but out of the pain of countless generations who had as their incentive the remembrance of the injunction to bring freedom and peace to all men as they themselves were brought freedom and peace from the bondage of Egypt.

In the diaspora, or even in Palestine, this will involve risking the danger of stimulating anti-Semitism among the forces of reaction. Nevertheless, it is by risking such dangers that the Jew has lived throughout the centuries. In theological ages we defied our environment by holding steadfastly to those things which often meant persecution and death. Now in an age dominated by economic motives, we have to hold fast to the social ideals of Jewish life, even though it mean that we face an increased anti-Semitism.

No official Jewish affiliation with any political party or any specific brand of economics is implied. Individual Jews will always differ in these fields. That difference, however, does not prevent the Jewish group from developing a group social idealism. Of course, Jewish economic reactionaries are going to rage, but that, too, is not a new phenomenon. Jewish reactionaries in all ages have raged against the social idealism of their leaders. Even the masses of the Jews may not immedi-

ately acclaim the most advanced steps of this development. This also is not unprecedented. Even though the condition of the masses may inspire the social ideals of their leaders the masses do not always acclaim their leaders.

Nothing can be more clearly envisaged by any group dedicated to the crystallization of a positive Jewish consciousness in America and interested in the reconstruction of Jewish life than that this Jewish quality of a primary concern with social problems be recaptured.

The Menace of Land Speculation in Palestine

By ISRAEL GOLDSTEIN

RESIDENT correspondents as well as returning travelers are unanimous in their enthusiasm for the marvelous progress which is being made in Palestine today. In an economically depressed and spiritually confused world, news of activity and optimism reach us from Zion.

There are sufficient surface indications to substantiate these glad tidings. Forty thousand Jewish immigrants have entered the country during the past year. Twenty thousand out of the sixty thousand refugees from Germany have found a haven of refuge. The mandatory government is more generous than heretofore with immigration certificates on the labor schedules. The orange industry is growing beyond proportions thought possible only a few years ago; the world market seems far from having reached the saturation point for the Jaffa orange. With a continuing influx of capital, a shortage of labor prevails, so that it has been necessary to harness the energy even of the school youth for the work at hand. The building industry is expanding; Tel Aviv, Haifa, Jerusalem and even some of the agricultural colonies are crowded to capacity. Rent is soaring, while new houses are erected almost overnight. New industries, fostered by the skill and experience of former captains of industry in Germany, spring up and gain markets in the Near East and in Europe.

All seems to be well. The country is rapidly growing. Impoverished and persecuted Jewries focus their attention on Palestine and an uncontrollable stream of Jewish energy and enterprise, of the kind that rushed westward to America in the early part of the twentieth century, now turns eastward. The prospect of a five-hundred-thousand-strong Palestine Jewry is not far distant. The Zionist ideal, our age-old dream, is apparently being realized.

Yet a sober analysis makes it difficult to join in this chorus of hallelujahs; in fact, it becomes one's duty, without being unduly pessimistic and without assuming the ungrateful role of kill-joy, to sound a warning. True as the reports cited above may be—and there is no reason to doubt their authenticity—they contain in some respects elements for anxiety and concern to those who have not lost sight of the first principles of the Zionist movement.

If Palestine were a country where Jews go, as they have gone for centuries to other parts of the globe, driven by persecution and in need of asylum, the present development would be cause for unmitigated satisfaction. Palestine is not such a country. Zionism was not inaugurated, cherished and fostered by Jews merely as a relief enterprise. *The Zionist ideal contributes, in its truest sense, a Jewish plan of social reconstruction.* As the result as well as the expression of Jewish self-analysis and self-criticism, Zionism more than a half a century ago recognized and revealed to the Jewish masses the evils inherent in the structure of Jewish life in the diaspora. Nurtured by the messianic

hope for a better world to come, and made articulate by modern organization and modern diplomatic procedure, the national movement undertook to reconstruct the life of the Jewish people politically, economically and spiritually.

Contending as it did that the ills and evils so rampant in the Jewish life of many countries had their origin in the basically abnormal status of a diaspora existence, Zionism held out to the Jews the promise of normal growth and healthy development on the soil, free from the stultifying conditions of the ghetto. The Jewish National Home was not to be merely a conglomeration of hustling, bustling *luftmenschen* who read the daily stock exchange quotations and real estate news in their Hebrew morning paper, rather than in *Das Berliner Tageblatt, Neues Viener Journal, Asz Test, Kurjer Poranny* or *New York Times.* Palestine was to be a home for a healthy Jewish life, built on a well-balanced national economy and on the principles of a better order of social justice. This expectation implied the emergence of an enlightened agricultural class.

Since the days of Henry George, it has been no paradox to couple Progress with Poverty. One does not have to concede that the Single Tax is a panacea for all the evils of the economic system, but the principle advocated by the single taxers has been strikingly demonstrated, that wealth is based upon the land and that the "ownership of land is the great fundamental fact which ultimately determines the social, political, the economic and consequently the intellectual and moral condition of a people." To ignore it is to shatter the very foundations of Palestine's economy.

The founders of the Zionist movement did not ignore that principle. They planned a reconstruction program which was based upon the recognition that only land and land culture can have a redeeming influence upon Jewish character and personality. Thus from the very inception of the movement they insisted upon shaping such policies as would insure a development that takes into account the interests of the land as a whole and of the people as a whole, rather than the transitory interests of the individual or any group of individuals. They sought to protect the public interest by securing the public ownership of the land as national property. They called into being the Jewish National Fund, whose function is the public redemption of the soil of Eretz Israel with a view to making it national inalienable property, safe from speculation, exploitation and alien cheap labor.

The principle underlying the work of the Jewish National Fund was incorporated into the Zionist reconstruction program not because of doctrinaire desires. The builders of the Jewish National Home were not Utopian; the hard realities dictated this program. The economic status of the large masses of the Jewish people in diaspora countries and the position of the Jewish agricultural population already existing in Palestine demanded the policy of public ownership and development. In the first place, no private interest could have undertaken such non-profitable enterprises as the draining of swamps in the valley of Jezreel, or the reclamation of the then desolate Wadi Hawareth, the now flourishing orange belt in the Sharon, the extensive reforestation work carried on by the Jewish National Fund, or the installation of water supply system. In the second place, the need for security against attack and for the protection of Jewish labor against the competition of cheap non-Jewish labor clearly points to public ownership as the only effective policy. And thirdly, only public land purchase and ownership can prevent that ugly and immoral speculation which must, by its very nature, through boosting prices, close the gates of the Jewish National Home to the Jewish masses.

It is precisely in this danger zone

that we have manifested a short-sightedness which is appalling. Increasingly, we are endangering the primary principles of Zionism and jeopardizing the further normal growth and the healthy development of the Jewish National Home. And the greater the progress, the greater is the danger facing the Zionist ideal and the structure we had hoped to erect in Palestine. Face to face with what appears to be the fulfillment of our aspirations, we must consider the situation soberly and sound a warning. We must ask: is there no danger that we are building up in Palestine a new economic ghetto in which a disproportionately large middle-class and overcrowded professions will dominate the scene? A careful examination of the pertinent facts causes one to doubt seriously whether the prosperity of which we hear so much spells unqualified progress.

When the pioneers of our movement came to Palestine in the days of the Bilu, or even a generation later in the days of the Emek colonization, 75 per cent to 90 per cent of the immigrants settled on the soil. What of the forty thousand Jews who entered Palestine in 1933? Their overwhelming majority have remained in the cities and in the few industrial centres.

It is reliably estimated that since the issuance of the Balfour Declaration more than $250,000,000 of Jewish wealth has been poured into Palestine. The Palestine Foundation Fund alone has raised, since 1921, a sum approximating $25,000,000. How much of this Jewish wealth has gone into the solution of the fundamental problem—the problem of the land? The cultivable area of western Palestine consists of approximately 13,000,000 dunams. How much of this area since the issuance of the Balfour Declaration has come into Jewish possession? The answer is very disappointing. The total of Jewish land purchases since 1918 does not exceed 600,000 dunams, and while much has been said in favor of private initiative, the fact remains that since 1927 the Jewish National Fund has acquired almost twice as much land as all other Jewish land purchasing agencies (137,000 dunams, as compared with 72,000 acquired by other agencies).

Today, with the phenomenal growth of a city like Tel Aviv, the rapid development of Haifa and Jerusalem, and the conversion of some of the agricultural settlements into urban districts, we are appalled by the realization that in fifty years we have succeeded in settling on the land as tillers of the soil a population of less than 60,000. And we become conscious of a more dangerous trend. The demand of the private investor for land has whetted the appetites of profit seekers. Jews are not merely competing with Jews but even "cutting out" one another after agreement between buyer and vender has been reached. Cases are known where the price offered by speculators to the Arab is so high as to make it worth the seller's while to pay his purchaser contractual damages and break the agreement. The new buyers, the third, fourth and fifth, have to pay the difference. One significant figure tells the story. The Palestine government has during the past year received the amount of $1,000,000 in land transfer fees for transactions such as those described above, which have not extended Jewish land possession in the country but rather placed a prohibitive wall around it.

It was such inflation of prices which saddened the last days of Chaim Nachman Bialik. Our national poet, on June 2nd of this year, prior to his departure from Tel Aviv, uttered the following words which should ring in the ears of all those who are concerned with Palestine not only as a haven of refuge for a few thousands of Jews, but as a means for the reconstruction of Jewish life:

"The second evidence of our sickness is the ignominous speculation which is eating us up like a moth. The devil's

glitter of gold has blinded our eyes. We boast of prosperity and success where there is but the empty excitement of speculation. One dunam of land passes through ten hands and each time its price rises—and we consider this progress and prosperity! Land has really no value other than what it can give men for their support at a time of danger and crisis. Yet we deal in land just as speculators during the war and revolution did with bread. A sack of flour would pass through dozens of hands, sometimes coming back to the same person with its price soaring to astonishing figures. And yet it remained but the same sack of flour and the fictitious "millions" were blown away like smoke.

"Another sign of disease is the desertion of the village for the town. Fate did us a great kindness in endowing us with the Jewish laborer. He went forth to the village to renew the foundations of our life, to bind us to the soil. And now with the false traffic of prosperity in the towns, the Jewish laborer is leaving the village, deserting our national positions and preferring a lighter existence in the city.

"And hence a further misfortune—the fourth sign of our disease—non-Jewish labor. The great achievement of decades of years, the grand national asset—Jewish labor—is being destroyed before our eyes. And we do not ask ourselves what shall we do on the morrow, on the day of visitation and danger, when strange workmen fill our settlements? Who will stand by us and who will protect us in the days of storm and stress . . . ?"

BOOK REVIEW

Religion as a Function of Experience

"A COMMON FAITH," John Dewey; Yale University Press, New Haven, Conn., 1934.

THIS brilliant little book comprises the three Terry lectures delivered at Yale last year, and John Dewey has written them with clarity and power. In the first lecture, he distinguishes between religions and "religious," the latter a quality inherent in all aspects of human activity, the former that complex of "beliefs, practices and modes of organization that have accrued to and been loaded upon the religious element in experience by the state of culture in which religions have developed." The time is now ripe, says Dewey, for the religious impulse to be emancipated from the supernaturalism which has stifled it, and to be identified with the belief in the possibilities for the realization of human ideals rather than with "assent to the proposition that the ideal is already embodied in some supernatural or metaphysical sense in the very framework of existence." Ideals, he points out, are always imaginative and it is only in demonstration of a psychological truism that "human nature . . . converts the object of desire into an antecedent reality, and ascribes existential reality to it."

How then can we be sure that ideals are not completely fantastic, that they have roots in existence? Dewey proves that purposes or "ends" are as real as those phenomena whose reality we never question, by the fact that "ends, purposes, exercise determining power in human conduct." "Aims, ideals, do not exist simply in 'mind'; they exist in character, in personality and action." This relation between the actual experience of inequality, injustice and disease and the ideals of equality, justice, and health to which they give rise is the object of Dewey's faith, that to which he applies the name "God," for the existence of that relationship testifies to the presence in the world of "forces in na-

ture and society that generate and support ideals." What is divine in human life, says Dewey, are "those factors in existence that generate and support our idea of good as an end to be striven for." Those factors constitute the object of worship, for it is acknowledgment and appreciation of those factors which fortify our conviction that life *can be* worthwhile.

Since this conception of God touches upon "every aspect of human experience that is concerned with estimate of possibilities, with emotional stir by possibilities as yet unrealized, and with all action in behalf of their realization," Dewey deplores the secularization of modern life. The whole world should be the "abode of the religious function," and present day life has specialized the functions and offices of Church and Synagogue to the point of irrelevance. When so-called liberal institutions do enter the arena of social problems, their indictment of evils is confined to harangues against the "symptoms . . . rather than to the causes of war and of the long list of economic and political injustices and oppressions. Protest against the latter has been mainly left to secular movements." This familiar fact moves Dewey to appeal not for the humanization of religious institutions, but for an understanding of the religious quality inherent in allegedly secular activities. Those activities so understood constitute for Dewey the broad foundations of his Common Faith "that shall not be confined to sect, class or race."

The lectures are thus a plea for a kind of universal religion. This reviewer ventures to point out that Dewey ignores the fact that the religious impulse is not merely the function of experience as a whole but, historically, the function of a civilization. And although the ideal ends may coincide in a variety of civilizations, "the factors in existence that generate and support our idea of good as an end to be striven for" are the specific *sancta* which represent the experience of particular civilizations. The religious impulse is undoubtedly universal; and in a world of rapidly diminishing proportions, the *sancta* which are yet to be created, will tend more and more to be the common possession of all peoples. But whatever *sancta* we have inherited from the past have been embodied in particular and varied forms. Applying Dewey's criteria to Judaism, we Jews should approach Jewish religion as the function of the totality of Jewish civilization, drawing our *sancta* from our Jewish experience to inspire us to those purposes which we share with the rest of all mankind.

IRA EISENSTEIN.

Subscription Blank

The RECONSTRUCTIONIST

15 West 86 St., N. Y.

Enclosed is $1.00 for a year's subscription.

Name .....

Address .....

.....